

**Greenway Commission
August 11, 2011**



Members present:

Marcia Bromberg
Sue Barlow
Glen Locascio
Stephen Jones
Marc Hunt

Staff present:

Al Kopf, Superintendent of Planning & Development
Megan Shepherd, Special Projects Coordinator
Seth Hendler-Voss, Landscape Architect
Richard Grant, Public Works

Marcia called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

1. Review and approve July minutes

Stephen moved to approve the July minutes, Sue seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Board training

Megan demonstrated the new board orientation online presentations and explained the overarching board development program. Marcia said she would like to see more training specifically devoted to greenways. Megan described the elements of the board development program that would address that and said the board Chair and staff liaison can work with new members on any other specific trainings requested.

3. Staff Updates

Planning Department:

Blake reported that this month's issue of Planning Magazine covers greenways. He also noted that the Community Development department is involved with the Tiger II grant, which affects several greenways.

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts Department:

Seth added that Reid Creek Greenway is under construction and the schedule is proceeding on time. The retaining wall is complete. Regarding the Tiger II project, the APRCA will likely manage the greenway component (one of seven grant components), which involves refining the design, solicit public input, handling environmental due diligence, and producing 75% of construction drawings for Clingman and Town Branch greenways. There will be a very extensive public process involved with this grant over a three-year timeline. Marc expressed his desire to support connectivity between plans;

there are various plans and development projects in the grant's geographic area and he thought they should connect seamlessly and integrate bike/ped/greenway concerns. Marc moved that in the implementation of the Tiger II planning effort and Radtip(?), staff ensure that Town Branch and Clingman greenway plans show continuous linkages (either bike lanes, sidewalks, or greenways) to the greenway elements in the Wilma Dykeman Plan. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Close an alley between Nebraska Street and Nevada Avenue

Richard Grant from the Public Works department presented an alley close request for an area between Nebraska Street and Nevada Avenue. A vast majority of residents signed a petition in favor of closing this alley. Several of those residents attended the Greenway Commission meeting today to speak in favor of closing.

Marcia asked Richard if he has received word of anyone who doesn't want this to happen. Richard said there is one resident who wants to leave the alley open with the possibility of putting a future road in. The interested resident has deeded entrance and egress to his property from Nevada St., but he is considering installing a road in the alleyway to give access to a land-locked parcel that he created from a larger parcel. This would disrupt an environment with old trees.

The residents in attendance, on behalf of all petitioners, said this land hasn't been used for at least 60 years, based on the growth of trees. It's a habitat for wildlife and a special part of the neighborhood. It would be difficult to put a road through it, because it's very dense with foliage. Stephen asked if anyone has visited the area. Sue had, and said she wasn't aware there was a road corridor in the area. She felt this alley closure made sense to her.

Shannon ? said the Planning Department does have a concern from a planning and zoning perspective. This area has potential for infill development, and for that reason they generally like to keep public rights-of-way open. Marc asked for a description of how that right-of-way might be used in the future. Shannon said hypothetically, some of the lots are large and could be subdivided under certain circumstances. Single-family structures are usually allowed to build accessory structures; if the City precludes access it makes this more difficult.

Sue asked how many lots would be affected by closing the alley. Shannon said there's a wide variety of ways land owners might assemble properties. It's also convenient for residents to have alley access to their homes in addition to street access. Marcia said it appears the houses on the west side would have more potential for infill. Shannon noted that when an alley is closed, that property goes to property owners to make their lots larger.

Richard said that 11 out of 13 residents are in favor of closure. Marcia asked if there is immediacy to this issue. Richard said the process began when he received the petition, and that Council will address the issue on September 13. Marcia said she understood

Shannon's point, but also felt the residents had spoken. Stephen, however, said the property owner of the L-shaped parcel had a legitimate concern.

Richard said City Council will make the final decision and all residents will have a chance to speak in a public hearing. Stephen asked if the lot in question is subdividable. Shannon said this is multi-family zoning, so they aren't required to subdivide to add more units.

Julia Schaffer, one of the residents, explained that the person who owns the L-shaped lot originally owned a wider lot and intentionally cut it into the current shape. There are only two lots that are large enough for additional development, and the other land owner is not interested in future development of her property.

Marc asked who would implement the infrastructure in creating an alley. Shannon said the private property owners would be responsible for road development in most cases. It's probably not a candidate for a public road, but an alley is possible. She emphasized that her department is trying to preserve the opportunity for future development regardless of current land owners. No construction would happen until there was a desire for it. Marc asked if there is an approval process for the private property owner to create an alley. Shannon said that if an interior lot's deed grants that egress, that person would normally have permission to construct an alley.

Marc felt the preservation of continuous strips of vegetation is important, but with increasing population growth an area such as this with affordable housing opportunities is also important. If infill opportunities diminish, it will push development further out into other habitat and preserved areas. Marc recommended not closing the alleyway with these concerns in mind. Stephen seconded. Glen noted that there is no conflict for future greenways or connectivity. Sue abstained from the vote. Four voted in favor, none against, and the motion passed.

Marc added that there's a state law describing how street closures go forward. It is City Council's decision. There is no formal petition process, though he feels it is appropriate that residents did and do have a say. Richard, however, said the general statute does allow for residents to formally petition. Marc wanted to continue discussing this issue because it's not clear.

5. Reports

Parks & Greenways

Glen reported that the Foundation is proceeding with a fundraising plan for the new recreation center.

Buncombe County Greenway Commission

Marcia reported that Ann Babcock and Sue are working together on outreach activities. The County is contracting with a PR firm to develop an outreach plan. Connect

Buncombe is the name of the greenway master plan process. The Commission has been working on a tagline for the process.

Community Outreach Committee

Sue reported that RiverFest is happening on Saturday and asked for volunteers to staff a table. The County will be there as well. There is also the upcoming Downtown After 5. She thanked Commission members for volunteering to staff that event. Sue is also compiling a list of all farmers markets to see if we can get a table at those. Marcia thanked Sue for her commitment and work organizing outreach events.

Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway

Marcia reported this group is working on a number of projects to ensure the Hominy Creek area is clean and walkable. They are also working on naming the greenway. She felt the Commission needs to speak with Brother Hug to work on this naming issue together, because this is a wider communications issue that spans the whole city and county.

6. Other Business

No other business.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m. to set up room for the upcoming public comment session.